

Grenada

{gruh-nay'-duh}

Grenada is an independent island nation in the WINDWARD ISLANDS of the Caribbean, located about 150 km (90 mi) north of the South American coast.

LAND, PEOPLE, AND ECONOMY

In addition to the main island of Grenada the nation also includes the nearby smaller islands of Carriacou, Petit Martinique, and several islets of the GRENADINE ISLANDS. Grenada is a volcanic, mountainous island with little level land. Numerous streams, springs, and mountain lakes are found on Grenada, and alluvial river valleys provide fertile soil for farming. The island is heavily wooded with teak and mahogany. Grenada's climate is tropical, with an average annual temperature of 23 deg C (78 deg F) and with rainfall ranging from 1,525 mm (60 in) on the coast to 4,190 mm (165 in) in the mountains.

About 85% of the population is of black African descent; the remainder are chiefly mulatto or of East Indian descent. English is the official language, but many Grenadians speak a French patois. The majority of the population is Roman Catholic. Education is free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, employing 40% of the labor force and accounting for most of the foreign-exchange earnings. The chief export crops are nutmegs and mace, cocoa, and bananas. Food crops are also produced for local consumption. Tourism is important to the economy, helped by a new airport (1984). Grenada must import many products and commodities to satisfy its needs; imports consistently far exceed exports. The nation is also heavily dependent on foreign aid.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover Grenada, in 1498. The island was settled by the French in 1650; subsequently it was held alternately by English and French until 1783, when the island was ceded by treaty to Britain. Grenada remained a separate British colony until 1958 when it joined the Federation of the West Indies; in 1967, Grenada became one of the WEST INDIES ASSOCIATED STATES. Independence, within the Commonwealth, was achieved in 1974.

Sir Eric M. Gairy was prime minister of Grenada until 1979, when he was overthrown by the Marxist New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, which established a People's Revolutionary Government. On Oct. 14, 1983, Bishop was ousted by another New Jewel faction and then murdered. On October 25, a U.S. task force invaded the island, allegedly to forestall a Cuban and Soviet military buildup there. Subsequently, Sir Paul Scoon, the governor general, appointed an interim government. By December all U.S. combat troops had gone. Following elections in December 1984, Herbert A. Blaize became prime minister. He died in office in 1989. Nicholas Braithwaite was elected prime minister in 1990.

Thomas D. Boswell

Bibliography: Lewis, Gordon K., Grenada: The Jewel Despoiled (1987); O'Shaughnessy, Hugh, Grenada: Revolution, Invasion and Aftermath (1984).

25 Oct 1983
US Forces invaded Grenada
to forestall Cuban & Soviet
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